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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000149

SIPDIS

NOFORN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/29/2014

TAGS: [PARM](#) [KNNP](#) [PREL](#) [KN](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA AND DPRK MISSILES

REF: A. ABUJA 96

[B](#). 03 ABUJA 2199

Classified By: CDA RICK ROBERTS FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY: Nigeria has continuing military cooperation with the DPRK, but the Nigerians tell us they are only talking about missiles to keep the door open for military aid from the DPRK, and do not intend to procure missiles or their technology. DPRK VP Yang Hyong-sop is visiting Nigeria this week for meetings with various Nigerian leaders, including President Obasanjo, and Nigerian VP Atiku has been Yang's main host. After Yang's meeting with Atiku January 28, Atiku's spokesman said various things at different times to the press about Nigerian interest in missiles. President Obasanjo's Senior Special Assistant, Ad'Obe Obe assured the CDA on January 29 that no military cooperation of any kind was discussed in Obasanjo's meeting with Yang, and that the GON had no intention of purchasing missiles or missile technology from the DPRK. We asked the senior MFA official in-country on January 29, PermSec Wadibia-Anyanwu, for further information on what transpired, which she said she would provide. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) The DPRK VP is on an official visit to Nigeria, hosted until today by Nigerian VP Atiku Abubakar. In publicized meetings with Yang, Obasanjo and Atiku thanked the DPRK for assistance to Nigeria for last year's All Africa Games, and discussed possible joint economic projects. The Nigerian press reported that the projects would be in Adamawa and Nasarawa states. Then VP Spokesman Onukaba Ojo startled everyone by speaking of the DPRK sharing ballistic missile technology with Nigeria, an MOU, and Nigeria's need to enhance the capability of its military for peacekeeping and to protect Nigeria.

BACKGROUND

[1](#)3. (S/NF) Recently North Korea has made an effort to expand its defense cooperation ties with Nigeria. In August-September, a North Korean delegation led by Deputy Defense Minister Jong Chon-dok met with Nigerian Chief of Defense Staff GEN Ogomudia to discuss the possible sale of a wide variety of weapons systems to Nigeria. According to DAO Abuja sources (REF B), the North Korean delegation confessed it badly needed hard currency and was willing to sell "anything in their inventory" to Nigeria. Reportedly, a Memorandum of Understanding concerning defense cooperation was signed during Jong's visit. Despite the MOU and North Korea's offer to sell "missiles and submarines," the GON expressed the greatest interest in procuring a radar system to better monitor air traffic within the country.

[1](#)4. (S/NF) North Korea also dispatched a small team of engineers in early January to assess the Defense Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) factories as a prelude to a North Korean takeover of the recently suspended Chinese efforts with DICON. DAO Abuja reporting (REF A) confirms that China suspended its DICON program after the Nigerian government failed provide the agreed upon funding. Sources within the Nigerian military believe it is unlikely the North Korean efforts to rehabilitate DICON will be successful, but the GON is willing to go along anyway if the North Koreans are willing to foot the bill.

ENTER YANG

[1](#)5. (C) DPRK VP Yang then came to town. Nigerian VP Atiku's office put out a press release late January 27 that (inter alia) Atiku reiterated Nigeria's desire for a peaceful world devoid of constant threat of nuclear war, that Nigeria understood the antecedents of North Korea's nuclear program, that Nigeria expected North Korea to support Nigeria's bid for a UNSC permanent seat, that the GON would continue to cooperate with the DPRK in the defense sector, and that Atiku expressed hope that the next Nigeria-DPRK Joint Commission (meeting) "would bring about the signing of many agreements." The next day, January 28, Yang had meetings with Obasanjo and Atiku, and Atiku's spokesman started making comments to

reporters.

16. (C) President Obasanjo's Senior Special Assistant, Ad'Obe Obe, came to the Embassy the next morning, January 29, to assure the CDA that no military cooperation of any kind was discussed in Obasanjo's meeting with Yang, and that the GON had no intention of purchasing missiles or missile technology from the DPRK. The CDA thanked him for that assurance. CDA and PolCouns took advantage of an already scheduled meeting with the MFA PermSec on other business January 29 to ask her about what had transpired and give her a copy of the Department Spokesman's January 28 remarks. She responded that the press frequently lied and that Yang would be visiting the MFA the next day, January 30. In any case, she said, "We have been aware of U.S. concerns generally about North Korea." PolCouns noted that a recording of Atiku's spokesman had played on the BBC that morning, saying something rather different than what the print press quoted from other interviews. The PermSec allowed that it was important to set the record straight, and agreed to provide whatever information she could -- including a transcript of the print press interview -- on what had transpired.

COMMENT

17. (C) While it is clear North Korea has taken significant steps in recent months to bolster its defense cooperation with Nigeria, it is highly unlikely the GON would go so far as to purchase ballistic missiles. We believe it likely that the MOU on military cooperation that Nigeria and the DPRK signed last year does include mention that missile technology transfer is possible. The cash strapped Nigerian government has demonstrated a pattern of behavior with several countries (Bulgaria, China, India, Israel, Romania, and Russia) in which many meetings are held and agreements signed, but ultimately the GON fails to deliver the money and no transaction takes place. We will keep after this issue.
Roberts